

apuntes

Reflexiones teológicas desde el margen hispano

***B.F. Stockwell, Protestant Mentality, and the Missionary
Appropriation of Sixteenth Century Spanish Reformers***

Rady Roldán-Figueroa

***The Least of These My Brothers:
Matthew 25:31-46***

David Cortés-Fuentes

La paz: promesa y desafío

Luis G. Collazo

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From the Editor

In the last several issues, I have tried to find a theme to help tie the different articles published in the issue together, in some cases, choosing articles dealing with related themes. However, this issue has proven to be a challenge, since each article provides us with different perspectives from various disciplines of inquiry. They encompass a broad range of topics ranging from a historical exploration, to biblical exegesis, to the timely topic of peace. Yet, each article gives us unique and interesting insights into their topics, making new connections and providing us with interesting and sometimes surprising insights.

The first article is by Rady Roldán-Figueroa, who is a doctoral candidate at Boston University School of Theology and a Lilly Teaching Fellow in the Department of Religion and Philosophy at Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina. His article on Stockwell, a protestant missionary to Latin America, gives us some unique insights on the missionary work at the turn of the century, as well as the appropriation of Spanish reformers in Stockwell's missionary work.

The second article by David Cortés-Fuentes, who teaches in the Southern California campus of San Francisco Theological Seminary, gives us a new insight into Matthew 25:31-46, leading him to arrive at some surprising conclusions regarding that often quoted passage and the meaning of "the least of these" in those passages.

Finally, Luis G. Collazo, who is on the faculty in ethics and religion at the Universidad Interamericana, Arecibo, in Puerto Rico, offers us an insightful and timely reflection on the promise of peace and the challenges it poses upon us as an ethical demand to actively oppose the forces of violence and war in our world.

B.F. Stockwell, Protestant Mentality, and the Missionary Appropriation of Sixteenth Century Spanish Reformers*

Rady Roldán-Figueroa

"Despite what the beginners sometimes seem to imagine, documents do not suddenly materialize, in one place or another, as if by some mysterious decree of the gods. Their presence or absence in the depths of this archive or that library are due to human causes which by no means elude analysis. The problems posed by their transmission, far from having importance only for the technical experts, are most intimately connected with the life of the past, for what is here at stake is nothing less than the passing down of memory from one generation to another."

(Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, 1953, p. 71)

I. Bowman Foster Stockwell: A Sketch of his Life and Work

Born September 17, 1899, to a Methodist family in Shawnee, Oklahoma, Bowman Foster Stockwell completed his BA at Ohio Wesleyan University in 1920, and then served the next two years as John R. Mott's secretary and travel companion through the United States, Europe, and Asia.¹

In June 1922, he married Vera Lucille Loudon, and they moved to Massachusetts, to pursue further theological studies at Boston University. In 1925, Stockwell completed the Bachelors of Sacred Theology at Boston University, and he embarked in a year of studies in Tübingen, Berlin, and Strasbourg, financed by a Jacob Sleeper Fellowship awarded by the School of Theology.

Upon his return from Europe, the Stockwells were commissioned as missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church to Argentina. They arrived in Buenos Aires in September 1926. From 1927 through 1932, Stockwell was rector of the Methodist theological seminary "Unión Evangélica." The following year Stockwell was back in Boston where he completed his Ph.D. dissertation at Boston University, entitled *The Philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno*.²

¹ See the autobiographical sketch in B. Foster Stockwell, "The Philosophy of Miguel de Unamuno" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1933); Tomas S. Goslin, "Introducción," to B. Foster, *¿Qué es el Protestantismo?/ ¿Qué podemos creer?* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: La Aurora, 1987), 13-37; Thomas S. Goslin, *B. Foster Stockwell: la historia de una misión* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1993).

² Ibid.

After his return to Buenos Aires, Stockwell reassumed the direction of the seminary "Unión Evangélica." He remained in this position until 1957. On August 7, 1960, Stockwell was consecrated Bishop of the Methodist Central Conference of Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, and Chile.³ Dr. Bowman Foster Stockwell died in Buenos Aires in June 1961.

Stockwell's contributions to the Protestant missionary enterprise in South America can be arranged into three distinct areas. The first is his contribution to the ministerial formation and theological training of an unprecedented generation of South American pastors and scholars. Under Stockwell's leadership the theological seminary "Unión Evangélica" evolved into one of the foremost academic institutions of theological training throughout Latin America, known today by its Spanish acronym ISEDET (Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos). Among its graduates are such leading figures as Emilio Castro and Jose Miguez Bonino, the latter becoming its president in 1960.

Stockwell firmly impressed upon the theological seminary "Unión Evangélica" a strong ecumenical character. The seminary served the needs of the Eastern South America Conference that included Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina.⁴ According to J. Tremaye Copplestone, the Disciples of Christ cooperated with the Methodists in sustaining the seminary from its early beginnings.⁵ In 1928, a year after Stockwell became the seminary's rector the Federation of Waldensian Churches formally joined the work of the school.⁶ In 1936 the seminary was renamed Facultad Evangélica de Teología (FET). By 1962 the FET counted on a broad base of interdenominational cooperation to which were added the Presbyterians and the German Evangelical Synod of the River Plate.⁷ Furthermore, the FET kept its interdenominational character well after Stockwell's death. In 1969 the FET went through a merger with the Lutheran Faculty of Theology and became the Inter-confessional Faculty of Theological Studies.⁸

³ Sidney H. Rooy, "Stockwell, B(owman) Foster," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, Gerald H. Anderson, ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998), p. 643.

⁴ J. Tremayne Copplestone, *History of Methodist Missions* (New York: The Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 1973), IV: 581-581.

⁵ *Ibid.*, IV:1038-39.

⁶ Marcelo Dalmas, *Historia de los Valdenses en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, c. 1987), p. 91.

⁷ B. Foster Stockwell, *The Christian Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean: Report of a Survey of Theological Education* (Geneva and New York: International Missionary Council - Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches - , 1962).

⁸ Goslin, *Historia de una misión*, p. 66-80.

The other area to which Stockwell made a significant contribution was the international missionary movement. He was a delegate to the Tambaram Conference (1938); the Conference on Christian Literature, Mexico (1941); the Amsterdam Assembly (1948), and; the Evanston Assembly (1954).⁹ Stockwell also played a significant role in the facilitation of the Latin American Evangelical Conference, celebrated in Buenos Aires in 1949.¹⁰

Finally, Stockwell also made an important contribution in the area of Christian literature. A direct outcome of Stockwell's participation in the Conference on Christian Literature, which took place in Mexico in 1941, was the creation of the regional River Plate Commission of Christian Literature.¹¹ Through this body, Stockwell was able to facilitate the formation of three periodicals: *El Predicador Evangélico* (1943), meant to address the needs of preachers; *Cuadernos Teológicos* (1950), a journal dedicated to the academic study of theology; and, *Arco Iris*, a periodical for children.¹² The fact that the theological seminaries of Buenos Aires, Matanzas (Cuba), Mexico City (Mexico), and Rio Piedras (Puerto Rico) jointly sponsored the journal *Cuadernos Teológicos* clearly reflects the far reach of this enterprise.¹³

However, Stockwell's work in the area of Christian literature began earlier and in a different capacity. Stockwell was editor of two series published by the Methodist publishing house, *La Aurora*.¹⁴ The series are "Obras Clásicas de la Reforma" ("Classic Works of the Reformation") and "Biblioteca de Cultura Evangélica" ("Library of Evangelical Culture").¹⁵ My primary interest is Stockwell's work as editor of "Classic Works of the Reformation," for here we find what I am designating as the missionary appropriation of the works of sixteenth-century Spanish reformers. Yet,

⁹ Ibid., p. 330-331.

¹⁰ Cf. B. Foster Stockwell, "Latin American Evangelical Conference (Buenos Aires, July 18th-30th, 1949)," *International Review of Missions* 39 (1950), p. 76-82.

¹¹ Goslin, *Historia de una misión*, p.235-240.

¹² Ibid., p. 249-255.

¹³ This relationship seems to have been of short duration. Already in 1955, the publication data of *Cuadernos Teológicos* credits the FET with sole responsibility for its edition and no longer mentions the other schools. Cf. Ibid., p. 252, and; *Cuadernos Teológicos*, "Publication Data," No. 16, 1955.

¹⁴ The history of *La Aurora*, its impact on the missionary enterprise as well as of Protestant publishing in general throughout Latin America calls for close and critical attention. According to Sante Uberto Barbieri, in 1949 alone *La Aurora* published twenty-two books and distributed 67,000 copies. Sante U. Barbieri, "Methodism in Latin America," *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 176 (Ap. 1951), p. 149-155.

¹⁵ Cf. Rooy, p. 643.

before turning our attention to this series, it is important to see Stockwell's own writings as clear instances of a Protestant mentality.

II. Stockwell's "Protestant Mentality."

In a seminal essay (French 1974, English 1985), Jacques Le Goff provides a succinct theoretical reflection on the object and methodology of the history of mentalities.¹⁶ For Le Goff a mentality is essentially characterized by the impersonal content of an individual's thought.¹⁷ A mentality consists of intellectual components common to all sectors of a given society. Moreover, Le Goff points out that since its earliest use in the work of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in the early 1920 (Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's, *La Mentalité Primitive*, 1922), the notion of mentality serves to describe the features of a social psychology that appears as "overriding the psychology of any one individual."¹⁸ In short, a given mentality is made up of attitudes, behaviors, and representations that are deeply shared by members of a given society.

Le Goff makes two important observations concerning the sources that may be used to write such a history. In the first place, a given mentality can be assessed by observing aspects of daily life such as the "automatic gestures, spontaneous words, which seem to lack any origins and to be the fruits of improvisation."¹⁹ Here Le Goff indicates that the study of mentalities can be approached by means of quantitative methods, an approach that has been described as social history of the third level.²⁰ The study of serial data describing, for instance, church attendance, rate of marriage, and naming patterns, could all be used to assess a mentality precisely because of their attention to impersonal and routine aspects of the data.

A mentality could also be assessed by means of original expressions like works of art or literature. Such sources are important because they are not as concerned, in Le Goff's own terms, with "objective phenomena as with the representation of these phenomena."²¹ However, Le Goff warns

¹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, "Mentalities: A History of Ambiguities," in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 166-180.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 168; also, cf. Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-89* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 74-79.

²¹ Le Goff, p. 174.

against reliance on such sources since they do not necessarily articulate the content of the collective consciousness. That is, works of literature and art, in Le Goff's appreciation, consciously tend towards originality, while departing from what is impersonal and characteristic.²²

More recently Roger Chartier has articulated both criticism and an alternative proposal to the study of mentalities.²³ Chartier reacts against the consensual social model assumed by Le Goff and other historians of mentalities, including their precursors Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. Instead Chartier assumes a conflictual model of society. Consequently, Chartier proposes a shift from the study of mentalities understood as the shared values and attitudes of a given society, to the study of the representations of given groups within given societies.²⁴ According to Chartier, "collective representations" are "motifs," "mental categories," "mental images," that "forms the matrix for a variety of distinct sorts of discourse and practices."²⁵ Thus, Chartier criticizes the reliance on quantitative methods that characterized the earlier study of mentalities, and instead calls for a careful reading of texts in terms of the social matrix within which they are produced.²⁶

Finally, Chartier reacts against the determinist view reflected in previous histories of mentalities and wants to restore a due appreciation of individual agency.²⁷ As a consequence Chartier extends the focus of research to encompass not only representations but also the acts of appropriations. That is, Chartier claims that the appropriation of cultural representations is a creative process that also reflects a certain mentality. In particular, Chartier calls for the study of reading, publishing, and other forms of transmission of texts in terms of the social cleavages that surround them.²⁸

The history of mentalities, although an approach developed mainly by Medievalists, is not new to the study of Protestantism in Latin America. Indeed, in his study of Protestantism in the River Plate, Rubén Amestoy postulated that there are at least two discernible historical stages in the

²² Ibid.

²³ Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988).

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1-16.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5-6.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 19-52.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

²⁸ Cf. Roger Chartier, "Frenchness in the History of the Book: From the History of Publishing to the History of Reading," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, Annual Meeting, Worcester, October 21, 1987* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1988), 97: 299-329.

development of Protestant mentalities in that region of South America.²⁹ The first stage lasted until 1914 and was characterized by an “optimist vision of transformation.” In contrast, the second stage was characterized by an “awareness of failure.” Amestoy analyzed Protestant attitudes towards Catholicism, the Bible, conversion, Christian life, the missionary enterprise, and death. He concludes that prior to 1914 the Protestant mentality was characterized by a clear self-identification with civilization, progress, freedom, and democracy. It should be observed that Amestoy’s findings for the period prior to 1914 are well documented and strongly supported with references to primary sources such as denominational journals and bulletins of the period.

However, there are two limitations to his approach. First, Amestoy claims that after 1914 the Protestant mentality was characterized by a sense of “failure.”³⁰ Yet, Amestoy does not substantiate his claim with proper documentation. Indeed, he relies heavily on secondary sources. Moreover, out of the thirty-two references he makes to primary sources, there are only two that date to after 1914. Second, Amestoy makes no distinction between foreign missionaries, immigrant, or “native” Protestants, thus ignoring the possibility of internal cleavages within Protestantism in this region.

Chartier’s approach to cultural history allows us to assess the intellectual representations of Protestantism made by missionaries as well as the actual practices by means of which they appropriated specific cultural artifacts, namely printed literature. Furthermore, it allows us to broaden our appreciation of Protestant mentalities beyond the limits of studies like Amestoy’s by calling our attention to the categories actually used by a Protestant missionary. In the case at hand, I will set forth the mental images and intellectual categories Stockwell relied upon to provide a representation of Protestantism; a representation, it should be added, as accurate and honest as he could conceive. In addition, I will show how Stockwell’s representation of Protestantism is far from a sense of “failure.”

In his thirty years of service as rector of the FET, Stockwell contributed dozens of articles and book reviews in *Cuadernos Teológicos*, *El Predicador Evangélico*, and international journals of missions.³¹ However, his most fundamental and consistent orientation can be found in two short

²⁹ N. Rubén Amestoy, “Las Mentalidades Protestantes,” in *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina*, Enrique D. Dussel, ed., CEHILA (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1983), IX: 615-628.

³⁰ N. Rubén Amestoy, “La Segunda Epoca en las Mentalidades Misioneras,” in *Historia General de la Iglesia en América Latina*, Enrique D. Dussel, ed. CEHILA (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1983), IX: 629-636.

³¹ For a bibliography, although limited to articles in Spanish, see: Goslin, *Historia de una misión*, p. 327-330.

works published in Spanish and oriented towards a wider non-Protestant audience.

The first was his short pamphlet *¿Qué podemos creer? Hacia una filosofía Cristiana de la vida* (What Can We Believe? Towards a Christian Philosophy of Life: La Aurora, 1936).³² Stockwell's orientation in this essay is essentially apologetic. His argument progresses deductively from a philosophical consideration of the nature of religion to a consideration of the historical figure of Jesus. Along the stages of his argument, Stockwell discusses the historical development of religion, the particularity of Christianity, the reasonableness of believing in the "Christian God," and, finally, the nature of revelation.³³

Yet what seems to be an argument on behalf of the reasonableness of Christianity turns out to be an argument on behalf the reasonableness of Protestantism. Stockwell is addressing a predominantly Catholic audience and his main task is to provide not an apology for Christianity but for Protestantism.

Stockwell deploys at least two important rhetorical strategies in support of his argument. First, he appeals to the authority of the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in support of Protestantism. Indeed, according to Stockwell it was not "a protestant apologist, but the rector of the University of Salamanca," the one who built his notion of the tragic sense of life out of Luther and Schleiermacher.³⁴

The other strategy at Stockwell's disposal was the elaboration of a binary opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. In his work Stockwell betrays not only the influence of Schleiermacher and Harnack, but also of the French theologian Auguste Sabatier, whose work he quotes extensively. Sabatier, who was dean of the Protestant Faculty of Theology in the University of Paris, published between 1897 and 1899 a two-volume work in which he elaborated his views in the area of philosophy of religion. The first volume was entitled, *Outline of a Philosophy of Religion based upon Psychology and History* (1897).³⁵ The second one was entitled

³² B. Foster Stockwell, *¿Qué podemos creer? Hacia una filosofía Cristiana de la vida* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1936; 1987)

³³ Dr. Carter Lindberg has suggested that B.F. Stockwell's basic theological orientation can be a reflection of Boston University's tradition of theological personalism.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Auguste Sabatier, *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion Based on Psychology and History* (New York: J. Pott and Co., 1902).

Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit (1899).³⁶ This second work played a decisive influence on Stockwell.

Essentially, Sabatier made a contrast between those religions that relied on the dogma of authority to enforce their basic tenants and the religion of the Spirit, which he characterized as a religion of freedom. Although both, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism had manifested themselves as religions of authority, it was out of Protestantism that the religion of the Spirit would eventually emerge. At the same time the inability of Roman Catholicism to evolve beyond the dogma of authority would result in its own demise. In Sabatier's own words:

Yet between Catholicism and Protestantism there is this difference, that one has succeeded where the other has failed. The catholic system of authority has at last established and completed itself by the Vatican decree [i.e., Vatican I, on papal authority]. The Protestant system of authority has forever broken down. But we must not judge of these events by appearances. When we go to the bottom of things the relations are reversed; Catholicism is dying of its victory, while Protestantism is finding in its apparent defeat a means of salvation and a renewal of its youth.³⁷

The opposition between "religions of authority" and the "religion of the Spirit" provided Stockwell both with a fundamental framework and a typology for his apology. Hence, Stockwell was able to represent Protestantism as the highest form of Christianity arguing that it was the religion of freedom. Stockwell's characterization of Catholicism is the characterization of a state religion, the dynamics of which lead to both the endorsement of absolutism and papal infallibility.³⁸ Stockwell, however, is quick to remind his audience of the opportunity to "purify and enrich" the "religious heritage that we have received from our parents."³⁹ Indeed, Stockwell affirms:

However, the religious ideal of Protestantism is closer than that of any other form of Christianity, to the ideal

³⁶ Auguste Sabatier, *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, trans. by Louise Seymour Houghton (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 250-51.

³⁸ Stockwell, *¿Qué podemos creer?*, p. 150.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

represented by Augustine or the apostle Paul, and as such, is closer to the gospel of Jesus.⁴⁰

The opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, as religion of authority and religion of the Spirit respectively, finds clearer expression in Stockwell's latter work, *¿Qué es el Protestantismo?* (*What is Protestantism?*).⁴¹ Published eighteen years after his first publication, and this time by a commercial publishing house (Editorial Columba), *What is Protestantism?* still retains the apologetic orientation that we have observed.

Stockwell's argument is organized into four parts. In the introduction he sets the stage for the historical emergence of Protestantism in terms of its continuity with reformation movements during the fourteenth and fifteenth century. This is followed by a broad historical outline of the emergence of the Protestant movement. In the third part Stockwell turns his attention to what he calls the "basic principles of Protestantism." Here he elaborates the social ethical consequences stemming from the theological tenets of Protestantism. According to Stockwell these basic principles are: (1) the supremacy of Jesus Christ, (2) the reliance on grace and faith, (3) the authority of the Bible, (4) the universal priesthood of believers, and, (5) the democratic nature of the Christian community. His conclusion establishes a firm parallel between Protestantism and the religion of the Hebrew prophets.

Throughout the work the opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, respectively as religion of authority and religion of the Spirit, takes a variety of dimensions. First, while Protestantism is characterized by multiplicity, Roman Catholicism is monolithic. Stockwell acknowledges that although its multiplicity has been perceived as a weakness of Protestantism, in reality it reflects its strength. Protestantism's lack of "external uniformity" came as the price of religious liberty.⁴² In contrast

⁴⁰ "Sin embargo, el ideal religioso del protestantismo se aproxima más que el de cualquier otra forma del cristianismo, al ideal representado por Agustín o por el apóstol Pablo, y como tal, se acerca más al evangelio de Jesús." Ibid., p. 153.

⁴¹ B. Foster Stockwell, *¿Qué es el protestantismo?* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Columba, 1954; reprint, Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1987).

⁴² "Muchos reprochan al protestantismo por su gran variedad y sus múltiples divisiones, y los que se han acostumbrado a la organización monolítica de la Iglesia Católica Romana se confunden ante la diversidad de las iglesias protestantes... El Protestantismo conquistó su libertad religiosa a costa de la unidad externa y de la uniformidad." Ibid., p. 56

Roman Catholicism adopted a monolithic structure and became and authoritarian church as a reaction against religious freedom.⁴³

The second dimension of the authority/Spirit opposition lies in the role of the priesthood. According to Stockwell, the Reformers were in continuity with the medieval mystics in affirming the centrality of personal experience in religious life.⁴⁴ The centrality given to personal experience stemmed, according to Stockwell, from the Protestant basic belief in the "supremacy and spiritual activity of the living Christ." While Roman Catholicism ostensibly shared this belief, it did not carry it to its logical consequence. Instead Roman Catholicism stood in the way of personal experience by holding fast to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to a system of human and saintly intermediaries between the believer and God.⁴⁵ In contrast, the Protestant notion of the priesthood of all believers stood in sharp opposition to the Roman Catholic hierarchy.⁴⁶

A third dimension of the opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism is the contrast between authoritarianism and democracy. For Stockwell the Protestant stress on the spiritual supremacy of Christ and its affirmation of the universal priesthood of believers inevitably leads to the formation of churches along "democratic or republican" lines.⁴⁷ Moreover, according to Stockwell, Protestantism engenders liberal democracies. In his own words:

⁴³ "Tan difícil es comprender todas las implicaciones de la libertad religiosa. Roma trató de evitar este riesgo instituyendo una iglesia autoritaria. El protestantismo prefiere correr el riesgo y mantener la libertad." Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁴ "Los reformadores renovaron la afirmación de los místicos medievales, de que la religión cristiana debe ser, ante todo, una experiencia personal, y que para poder conocer a Dios el hombre debe vivir en íntimo contacto con El." Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁵ "La creencia protestante en la supremacía y actividad espiritual del Cristo viviente tiene por consecuencia necesaria el rechazo de otros intermediarios o intercesores entre Dios y el hombre, ya sea la jerarquía eclesiástica o los santos, o la bienaventurada Virgen. Todos éstos tienen tanta necesidad de la gracia divina como la persona más humilde del mundo, y solo en Cristo la pueden encontrar." Ibid., p. 62.

⁴⁶ "La supremacía de Jesucristo en la vida cristiana tiene por consecuencia, en el protestantismo, como ya queda dicho, el rechazo de todo intermediario humano entre Dios y el alma. Por lo tanto, el protestantismo significa, en principio, el fin del sacerdocio, es decir, el fin del sistema religioso en el cual la comunión del hombre con Dios, con todos los beneficios divinos, depende de la actuación de otros hombres consagrados para realizar ciertos actos específicamente sagrados." Ibid., p. 76.

⁴⁷ "La organización de las iglesias protestantes varía mucho de acuerdo con la historia y las costumbres de cada país, pero en general asume formas marcadamente democráticas o republicanas, una consecuencia natural del sacerdocio universal de los creyentes." Ibid., p. 83.

The protestant affirms that the State exists by divine right, that it has spiritual basis and that it ought to recognize its obligations before the supreme law of God. Government can be monarchic, like in England or Sweden, or [it may be] republican, like in Switzerland or the United States. Whatever may be its form, it ought to recognize the supreme and inalienable rights of the governed and be based in the consent of the people. This principle, when carried to practice, engenders liberal democracies, like those we just mentioned. These democracies have deep religious roots, since the protestant tradition teaches the spiritual value of personal discipline, it teaches the social responsibility of the free man and it recognizes that, in the last analysis, freedom is rooted in responsibility towards God.⁴⁸

Finally, Stockwell concludes his work by directly addressing the relationship between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. For Stockwell, Protestantism does not arise as the “negation” of any form of religion. Instead, Protestantism rises from the affirmation of personal religious experience and is rooted in the interpretation of the Bible and of Christian history. However, Protestantism does negate those “deformations and corruptions” that originate in the historical course of all forms of institutional religion, even within Protestantism itself. Indeed, in this sense Protestantism is as “old as the Hebrew prophets, who were the ‘Protestants’ of the Hebrew religion.”⁴⁹ Moreover, Stockwell concludes that, “Protestantism is not merely

⁴⁸ “El protestante afirma que el Estado existe por derecho divino,^f que tiene bases espirituales y que debe reconocer sus obligaciones ante la ley suprema de Dios. El gobierno puede ser monárquico, como en Inglaterra o Suecia, o republicano, como en Suiza o en los Estados Unidos. Cualquiera sea su forma, debe reconocer los derechos supremos e inalienables de los gobernados y basarse en el consentimiento continuo del pueblo. Este principio, cuando es llevado a la práctica, produce democracias liberales, como las que acabamos de mencionar. Estas democracias tienen profundas raíces religiosas, pues en la tradición protestante se inculca el valor espiritual de la disciplina personal, se enseña la responsabilidad social del hombre libre y se reconoce que, en ultimo análisis, la libertad se arraiga en la responsabilidad ante Dios.” Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁹ “Aquellos principios, que reflejan la comprensión protestante del Evangelio, indican claramente que el protestantismo no vive de negaciones, sino de profundas convicciones positivas, hondamente arraigadas en la experiencia religiosa y en la interpretación protestante de la Biblia y de la historia cristiana. Al mismo tiempo toda afirmación lleva en sí una negación. Las negaciones implícitas en el protestantismo se dirigen contra las deformaciones y corrupciones que surgen en el desarrollo histórico de toda religión institucional, incluso las mismas iglesias

Protestantism; it is above all and before all Christianity.”⁵⁰ Here we can appreciate Sabatier’s typology breaking into the open. In Stockwell’s mentality, Protestantism is the religion of the Spirit.

III. Stockwell and the Missionary Appropriation of Sixteenth-Century Spanish Reformers

As mentioned above, Chartier’s approach to cultural history calls our attention to the intimate relation between intellectual representations and acts of reading and transmission. He has termed the latter as practices of appropriation and emphasizes their character as creative practices. In this section I will show how Stockwell’s Protestant mentality found expression in concrete acts of appropriation such as the interpreting and reproduction of literary works of the sixteenth-century.

Towards the end of his life, Stockwell chaired a commission responsible for surveying the state of theological education throughout Latin America. The International Missionary Council sponsored this commission and the ensuing report, *The Christian Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean*, was published in 1962, shortly after Stockwell’s death.⁵¹ In addition to chairing this commission, Stockwell contributed two sections of the report.⁵² In one of these sections, “The Course of Study,” Stockwell argues that the period of the Reformation should hold a prominent place in seminary education.⁵³ Not only were many of the Latin American evangelical churches derived from the communions emerging during that period, but also the history of the Reformation itself is of significance for Latin America.⁵⁴ The history of the Reformation was both the history of the “rejection of ecclesiastical corruption and tyranny,” as well as that of the “return to the heart of the Gospel.” Stockwell also laments that the study of the Reformation is “carried on through the eyes of north European Protestants, and that the Reformation in Southern Europe – France, Italy, and

protestantes. En este sentido el protestantismo es tan antiguo como los profetas hebreos, que fueron los “protestantes” de la religión hebrea.” Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁰ “El protestantismo no es simplemente protestantismo; es sobre todo y ante todo cristianismo.” Ibid.

⁵¹ B. Foster Stockwell, *The Christian Ministry in Latin America and the Caribbean; Report of a Survey of Theological Education in the Evangelical Churches, Undertaken February-May, 1961, on Behalf of the International Missionary Council (now the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches)* (Geneva and New York: International Missionary Council, 1962).

⁵² Cf. introductory comments by Dr. Wilfred Scopes. Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 196-206.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 199-200.

Spain – is largely overlooked or forgotten.”⁵⁵ Moreover, Stockwell objects to the identification of Protestantism with Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon people and that of Roman Catholicism with Latin people. In order to dispel this notion and to enrich the spiritual life of Latin American Protestants, Stockwell recommends that the study of the work of figures like Juan and Alfonso de Valdés, Constantino Ponce de la Fuente, Cipriano de Valera, and Bernardino Ochino should take a “prominent place in the Reformation studies of our seminaries and Bible institutes.”⁵⁶

While making his remarks about the place of Spanish figures of the Reformation in seminary education, Stockwell proudly pointed out in a footnote how this body of literature had recently been brought to “light” in a series of reprints that made up the series “Obras Clásicas de la Reforma” (“Classic Works of the Reformation”), published by *La Aurora*.⁵⁷ Indeed, since the mid 1930s Stockwell had served as editor of this series. Works that were selected for publication included those of central Reformation figures like Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and John Calvin. Indeed the first number of the series was an annotated translation from German to Spanish of Luther’s *The Freedom of a Christian Man* (1520). By 1946, this work as well as a translation of Luther’s *The Lord’s Prayer* was in their second edition. By 1948 the series had thirteen titles. By that year the series included works like Luther’s *Large Catechism* (1529) and the *Schmalkaldic Articles* (1537). Stockwell had already in 1936 participated in the publication of a translation of John Calvin’s *Institutes*, a translation that by 1958 was in its second edition.

That figures like Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, and John Calvin may occupy a prominent place in a series entitled “Classic Works of the Reformation” is hardly surprising. However, what is surprising is that such figures share that prominence with less known and largely neglected religious dissidents who emerged out of sixteenth-century Spain. Indeed, Stockwell’s editorial work generated a new canon of Reformation literature. Alongside the established classical figures like Luther and Calvin, Stockwell situated figures like Juan de Valdés, Francisco de Enzinas, Juan Perez de Pineda, and Cipriano de Valera.

Stockwell’s early adherence to the conceptual scheme of a binary opposition between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism played a highly significant role in the constitution of this, “new revised standard” canon of Reformation literature. Indeed, this becomes clear when we closely read one of Stockwell’s early contributions to the series. In 1939, *La Aurora* published

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

a collection of prefaces to Castilian translations of the Bible.⁵⁸ Stockwell selected the prefaces and wrote the introduction to the work as well as the biographical sketches of each of the translators. This collection included Francisco de Enzina's dedication of his translation of the New Testament of 1543 to Charles V; Juan Perez de Pineda's dedication of his New Testament translation of 1556 to Philip II; Casiodoro de Reina's preface to his translation of the Bible of 1569; and, Cipriano de Valera's dedication to the Prince of Orange of his 1596 revision of Casiodoro de Reina's New Testament.

In his introduction, Stockwell argues that knowledge of the Gospel has always been at the core of all movements of spiritual "regeneration and reformation" of the "degenerated" forms of Christianity.⁵⁹ Moreover, for Stockwell all efforts to recuperate the "primitive spirit of Jesus and his Apostles" have resulted in the translation of the "Sacred Scriptures" into vernacular language.⁶⁰ According to Stockwell, such was the case of the reformation movement of the sixteenth century. The translation of the "Sacred Scriptures" was fundamental for the reformers to achieve their goals. The translation of the "Sacred Scriptures" made it possible for the people to pass judgment on the argument of the reformers. Stockwell argues that the works of translation realized by Spanish religious dissidents should be understood in this same light. In particular, the prefaces bring to light the religious convictions of the translators.⁶¹ Hence, for Stockwell the Spanish reformers or religious dissidents who stood behind these works of translation were part of a broader European movement to return to the "primitive spirit of Jesus and his Apostles."

Stockwell's editorial work for *La Aurora* ought not to be dismissed as Protestant "propaganda." This is made clear by the academic rigor with which he carried out, with few exceptions, his editorial task. A case in point was the edition that he prepared of Cipriano de Valera's translation of John Calvin's *Institutes* (trans. 1597).⁶² Stockwell introduced this two-volume reprint with a "literary" history of the *Institutes*.⁶³ In this narrative, Stockwell described the trajectory of the *Institutes* as Calvin modified it along the years. Moreover, Stockwell inserted Valera's translation into this narrative by

⁵⁸ B. Foster Stockwell, *Prefacios a las Biblias Castellanas del Siglo XVI* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1939).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶² John Calvin, *Institución de la religión cristiana*, trans. Cipriano de Valera (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1958).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. vii-xxiii.

tracing it to the early encounters of Francisco de Enzinas with Calvin's theology.⁶⁴ With this narrative structure, Stockwell firmly inserted the short history of the Spanish reformers into the broader stream of the Reformation through the European continent. In an earlier article, Stockwell analyzed Valera's translation of the *Institutes* and engaged in a critical analysis of Valera's sources.⁶⁵ In this way Stockwell was able to suggest Valera's alterations to the text. Moreover, Stockwell conceived of his scholarly enterprise as a "contribution to the emergence of evangelical theological thought" throughout Latin America.⁶⁶

Indeed, Stockwell's editorial work in the production of *La Aurora's* "Classic Works of the Reformation," represents an outstanding contribution to the preservation and dissemination of the ideas of sixteenth-century Spanish reformers. "Classic Works of the Reformation" embodies the only systematic effort, outside Spain, to reproduce the work of this neglected group of religious dissidents. Even within Spain, there is only one existing collection of these works. From 1847 to 1865, Luis de Usó y Río and Benjamin Baron Wiffen edited the multi-volume (20 vols.) collection, *Reformistas antiguos españoles*. This collection along the rare holdings of the private library of José María Lopez (a Spanish national residing in Argentina) provided the main sources for *La Aurora's* series.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, Stockwell's "Protestant mentality" made it possible for him to broaden the notion of the "Reformation," in order to include the works of figures that never broke with the Roman Catholic Church. Such was the case of Juan de Valdés. Two of Valdés' works, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana* (*Dialogue of Christian Doctrine*, 1529) and *Alfabeto Cristiano* (*Christian Alphabet*, 1536) were included as number twelve and thirteen of the series.⁶⁸ The case of Valdés' *Dialogue of Christian Doctrine* is particularly revealing. This work, originally published in Alcalá de Henares in 1529, disappeared after it was included in the "index" of the Spanish Inquisition in 1559. The French scholar Marcel Bataillon discovered the work in 1922 and reproduced it in a two-volume facsimile copy.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. xx-xxi.

⁶⁵ B. Foster Stockwell, "Fuentes de la version castellana de la *Institucion de la Religion Cristiana*, por Juan Calvino," *Cuadernos Teologicos*, Num. 5 (1952), p. 67-77.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁷ For the history behind the private collection of José María Lopez, cf. Goslin, *Historia de una misión*, p. 265-267.

⁶⁸ Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de doctrina Cristiana: nuevamente compuesto por un religioso* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1956)

⁶⁹ Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana Nuevamente Compuesto por un Religioso*, Alcalá, 1529. Reproduced in facsimile from a copy in the Bibliotheca

Stockwell's edition of the work followed this facsimile. However, as part of his two-volume work Bataillon had included a critical study in which he concluded that the *Dialogue*, far from sharing the spirit of Luther, really reflected the influence of Erasmus in early sixteenth century Spanish culture.⁷⁰ According to Bataillon, the *Dialogue* was nothing more than an "Erasmian catechism."⁷¹ Curiously, the French scholar Bataillon also relied on Sabatier's typology and called Valdés' spirituality a manifestation of the "religion of the spirit."⁷² It is very likely that it was a similar judgment that led Stockwell to include Valdés' work among the "classics" of the Reformation.

Resumen

Este artículo explora la apropiación para propósitos misioneros de la obra literaria de los reformadores españoles del siglo dieciséis. El artículo explora además la "mentalidad protestante" del misionero metodista B.F. Stockwell (1899-1961). El autor arguye que la "mentalidad protestante" de Stockwell fue el motor principal detrás de un programa completo de edición y reimpresión de obras literarias y teológicas originalmente escritas por disidentes religiosos españoles. El vértice de esta obra misionera de propagación literaria fue la editorial La Aurora de Buenos Aires, con la cual Stockwell trabajó estrechamente como editor durante su estancia misionera en Argentina en la primera mitad del siglo veinte. Finalmente, el artículo hace referencias al trabajo teórico de historiadores como Jacques Le Goff y Roger Chartier.

Nacional de Lisboa, with introduction and notes by Marcel Bataillon (Coimbra: Impr. da Universidade, 1925).

⁷⁰ Marcel Bataillon, *Introduction au Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana de Juan de Valdés (1529)*, avant-propos de J.R. Armogathe avec une étude inédite de Robert Ricard, "En Espagne: Orthodoxie et Inquisition." (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1981).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.

⁷² Marcel Bataillon, "Nuevas consideraciones sobre Juan de Valdés," in *Erasmus y el Erasmismo*, trans. Carlos Pujol, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1983), p. 255.

The Least of These My Brothers: Matthew 25:31-46

David Cortés-Fuentes

Recently I was asked to write a paper to be used by church leaders working in the evaluation of exegesis exams that candidates must pass before being certified as ready for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).¹ Although the passage for the exegesis was different, I wrote a paper on Matthew 25:31-46. What a surprise! Not only did I write the paper in the wrong passage, I have to confess, my findings surprised even me. I always read this pericope as an exhortation to the church to extend a helping hand to the people in need. I read the passage as a declaration and exhortation to discover Jesus in the people described there as the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner. In sum, I thought that the passage called the church to extend a helping hand to the victims and the people in desperate need. I have encountered that this understanding is shared by many Hispanic preachers, and, I am suspicious it is shared by some theologians as well. I would like to share with the community a revised version of the paper with the expectation that in sharing the findings, others may be challenged by them, and even others may challenge my interpretation of the text.

The specific circumstances of the Christian communities with which the Gospel is related are elusive.² The Gospel according to Matthew reflects a community in transition and auto-definition in the face of unexpected new circumstances that challenge traditional perspectives of the dominant community. Most of Matthew's scholars agree that the Gospel was written by a Jewish-Christian, probably from the Pharisaic tradition, near the end of the first century (80-90 CE). After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE, the Palestinian Jewish communities (as well as earlier Christian communities) find themselves at the crossroads of interpreting the meaning of their faith in a world without the Temple. The

¹The Biblical exegesis exam is only one of four final exams the candidates must pass. The other three are in the areas of worship, reformed theology, and church polity.

²The discussion related to the author, date, and places of composition, as well as the characteristics of the Matthean communities are beyond the scope of this presentation. There is a good summary of the major contemporary approaches and conclusions in M. G. Reddish, *An Introduction to the Gospels*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997) pp 107-143; G. N. Stanton, "The Communities of Matthew," in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical & Social-Scientific Approaches*, ed J. D. Kingsbury (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997) pp 49-62; and D. B. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 2nd Ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp 84-102.

Pharisaic community was able to survive the crisis of the Jewish-Roman war by reinterpreting and accommodating their faith to the new circumstance. They did this by replacing a Temple-oriented religious life for a life oriented to the study and practice of the Torah, the practice of piety as popular ethic of obedience and differentiation, and mutual solidarity.³

Matthew's church grew up as a community within Judaism, and as such understood itself to be the heir of God's promises and the authentic interpreter of the Law and the Prophets. The Gospel reflects a church in a struggle to understand how their history as a people could answer their new questions in their new situation. U. Luz proposes that Matthew's community was a Torah obedient Jewish Christian community, separated from the synagogue after the Jewish War. The church was confronted with and taking the first steps toward Gentile mission.⁴ In this context the Christology of the Gospel can be seen in its understanding that in Jesus of Nazareth, God's messianic promises in the Scriptures had been fulfilled. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and as such, in his proclamation ministry, teaching, deeds of wonder, his death on the cross, and resurrection is the authentic interpreter of the Law and the Prophets. He signals the route to follow in the life and mission of the church, and is expected to come as a triumphant judge.

Matthew's understanding of the person and meaning of Jesus is marked by continuous references to the fulfillment of the Scriptures throughout the narrative. According to Matthew, the community is expected to fulfill the will of God and to be obedient to the Law and the Prophets (Matt 5:17-20). Concrete examples of the Matthean view in relation to its Jewish background can be seen in Matthew's tactical endorsement of the dietary laws (Matt 15:1-20 cf. Mark 7:1-23),⁵ practice of the rules of the

³This is a paraphrase of the statement in *m* Abot 1:2 (as found in J. Neusner, *The Oral Torah: The Sacred Books of Judaism*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986) p 48: AOn three things does the world stand: On the Torah, and on the Temple Service, and on deeds of loving-kindness [sic]. In the day to day practice, the "Temple Service" was interpreted in the sense of religious acts of worship as a community and keeping the purity laws.

⁴Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, translated by Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) p 85.

⁵For example, Matthew tells the story of the controversy of what contaminates people in a similar way to Mark. Nevertheless, Matthew makes several changes in the story. Matthew suppress the phrase AThus he declared all foods clean@ from verse 19 in Mark. This way Matthew avoids eliminating the Jewish kosher dietary rules. See the full discussion of this in the commentaries of W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. II) (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) pp 516-540; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995) pp 427-437, and J. A. Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996) pp 222-227.

temple tax (Mat 23:23), keeping the Sabbath (12:1-8, cf. Mark 2:23-28; Matt 24:20),⁶ practicing prayer, fasting and almsgiving as religious rules (6:1-18). These were important religious practices in Judaism of the first century, specially Pharisaic Judaism.

According to Matthew, Jesus, during his earthly ministry, limited his action to the Israelite geographical limits and resisted mingling with non Israelites. This can be observed in Jesus' instructing his disciples saying: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 10:5-6). The same conclusion can be reached from Jesus' answer to the Canaanite woman: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). These arguments situate the community within the traditions of the people of Israel and its Jewish roots.⁷

The pericope of Matt 25:31-46 is the concluding section of the fifth instructional discourse to the disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew. These five discourses are: (1) the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), (2) the Missionary instructions to the Apostles (Matt 10:1-42), (3) the Parabolic discourse (Matt 13:13:1-52), (4) the Community discourse (Matt 18:1-35), and (5) the Eschatological discourse (24:1-25:46).⁸ Matthew signals the conclusion of each discourse with the phrase "now when Jesus had finished ..." (*kai egeneto hote etelesen ho iēsus*) (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). In addition to the concluding formula, the discourses have in common that they are addressed to the disciples, which stand for the church in the gospel. The literary limits of this pericope are clearly marked by a subordinate temporal conjunction in v. 31 and its conclusion in v. 46 as the final end to the whole discourse signals the new section in 26:1. Nevertheless, it is important to call

See also the discussion concerning circumcision in Matthew's community in U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, pp 86-87.

⁶According to D. Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998) pp 136-137, the fact that Matthew omits the saying of Mark 2:27: The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath is a sign that Matthew's community kept the Jewish Sabbath tradition. A more detailed commentary on this issue in J. A. Overman (*Church and Community in Crisis*) pp 175-177 and W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. II) pp 303-316.

⁷About Matthew's community and its relation with Judaism see the studies of A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), the commentaries of A. J. Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), D. A. Hagner, Donald A. *Matthew 1-13*. (Dallas: Word Books, 1993) and *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995).

⁸ See Terence J. Keegan ("Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 415-430) for a discussion of the literary limits and function of these discourses in Matthew.

attention to the fact that this last judgment scene is the conclusion of the Eschatological discourse which begins in Matthew 24:1.

These two chapters represent Matthew's version of Jesus' teaching regarding what will be the sign of his coming and of the end of the age (Matt 24:3). Chapter 24 shares a most of its material with Mark (13) and Luke (21), while most of chapter 25 is Matthew's exclusive material except the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) which has a literary parallel in the Parable of the Minas in Luke (19:11-27). The majority of Matthew scholars believe that Matthew composed these two chapters (and most of the Gospel) using the Gospel of Mark and a common oral tradition with Luke (called Q, or Quelle by the scholars) as literary sources. Furthermore, Matthew had additional independent material not found in Mark and/or Luke that the Evangelist used or composed in the final product of the Gospel. Given that Matt 25:31-46 is not found in any other Gospel, we will not invest much time discussing these literary relationships between the Gospels.

Before a discussion of other important topics of the pericope, it is convenient to review some textual issues in the passage and language issues. There are some early Greek textual variants of significance in Matt 25:31-46 that should be considered in the discussion of the pericope. The most important textual issues are:⁹ 1) 25:31 Some ancient manuscripts read "saints" (*hagioi*) instead of "angels" (*angeloi*), perhaps influenced by Zech 14:5 (according to the LXX). The majority and best textual witnesses read "angels" which should be preferred. 2) 25:32 Some other manuscripts have the third person singular "he/she will be gathered" (*sunaxthēsetai*) instead the third person plural "they will be gathered" (*sunaxthēsontai*). Given that the subject of the verb is the plural "all the nations," so the plural is preferred. 3) 25:41 Some ancient manuscripts omit¹⁰ the words "my brothers" (*tōn adelphōn mou*). This omission is most likely the result of the influence of the absence of these words in v 45. Some later manuscripts and early fathers add the phrase "which my Father prepared" (*ho ētoimesen ho pater mou*) probably influenced by its presence in v 34. The article *hoi*, translated into English by the phrase "you that are," is omitted in various early manuscripts. The word is enclosed in brackets in the Nestle-Aland text as an indication that the editors consider its authenticity doubtful. Its addition or omission does not make a significant difference in the meaning of the passage.

The language of the pericope does not present major difficulties. There are only few words that occur only once in the New Testament in this

⁹A good summary and discussion of the textual issues are discussed by Sherman W. Gray, *The Least of My Brothers: Matthew 25:31-46, A History of Interpretation*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp 5-6.

¹⁰The phrase is omitted in B¹ 1424 ff¹ ff² and in Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.

section of the Gospel. For instance, in verse 41 the participle “cursed” (*katēramenoi*) is used only here in the NT.¹¹ The phrase “eternal punishment” (*kolasin aiōion*) in verse 46 occurs only here in the New Testament, and the noun “punishment” (*kolasin*) occurs in the New Testament only here and in 1 John 4:18. Apart from these, the language is repetitive, especially in the fourfold repetition of the deeds of mercy, and easy to follow.¹²

Matthew 25:31-46 is the final pericope of the eschatological discourse of Matt 24:1-25:46. It describes, in apocalyptic language, the scene of the last judgment of the nations by the Son of man/king and the final fate of “the sheep” and “the goats.”¹³ The pericope can be outlined as follows, reflecting the parallel structure of the passage.¹⁴

Introduction: The glorious coming of the Son of man (v 31)

I. The great separation (vv 32-33)

II. Dialogue Between the King and the Judged (vv 34-45)

A. The reward of those at the right hand (vv 34-40)

1. The reward (v 34)

2. Its grounds (vv 35-36)

3. The protest (vv 37-39)

4. The principle (v 40)

B. The judgment of those at the left hand (vv 41-45)

¹¹The verb occurs in other forms in Mark 11:21; Luke 6:28; Rom 12:14 and James 3:9.

¹²A brief, but useful summary of the vocabulary of the section and its Matthean quality as well as some Old Testament connections can be found in Ulrich Luz, “The Final Judgment (Matt 25:31-46): An Exercise in ‘History of Influence’ Exegesis,” translated by Dorothy Jean Weaver, in *Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, edited by D. R. Bauer and M. A. Powell (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) p 289.

¹³See Graham N. Stanton, “One More: Matthew 25:31-46” in *Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992) pp 207-231; J. Hambrecht, “The Parousia Discourse: Composition and Content in Mat., XXIV-XXV,” *L’Evangile selon Matthieu* (BETL 29; ed. M. Didier; Gembloux: Duculot, 1972); and L. Cope, “Matthew 25:31-46: The Sheep and the Goats Reinterpreted,” *NovT* 11 (1969): 32-44. For a discussion of the apocalyptic nature of this pericope and its function in the early Christian communities. Also, David Cortés-Fuentes, “El mensaje de apocalíptico de Pablo en Primera de Tesalonicenses como un medio de esperanza” *Apuntes: Reflexiones teológicas desde el margen hispano* 13 (1993): 190-197 for a brief discussion of apocalyptic language as hope language.

¹⁴This outline follows closely, although not exactly, the ideas proposed by D. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, p 740, and W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison Jr. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. III). Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p 416.

1. The judgment (v 41)
2. Its grounds (vv 42-43)
3. The protest (v 44)
4. The principle (v 45)

Conclusion: The final division (v 46)

The artistic literary character of the pericope can be noted by another prominent structural feature: the fourfold repetition of the deeds of mercy in the pericope, which can be paralleled as follows:

The King to those on the right

I was hungry and you gave me food,

I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,

I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

I was naked and you gave me clothing,

I was sick and you took care of me,

I was in prison and you visited me.

Response of those on the right

when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food,

or thirsty and gave you something to drink?

And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you,

or naked and gave you clothing? And

when was it that we saw you sick

or in prison and visited you?

The King to those on the left

I was hungry and you gave me no food,

I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,

naked and you did not give me clothing,

sick and in prison and you did not visit me.

Response of those on the left

when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty

or a stranger

or naked

or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?

This passage had been interpreted in various ways throughout the history of the church. According to Sherman W. Gray, as many as thirty two 'variously nuanced positions' have been advanced.¹⁵ But these positions can be summarized in two main interpretation perspectives: the 'universalist' and the 'particularist' positions. The main debate is around the meaning of the phrases and the identity of those called "all the nations" *panta ta ethnē*, in v32 and the identity of who are called the "the least of these my brothers" (*toutōn tōn adelphōn mou tōn elaxistōn*) in verses 40 and 45.

¹⁵Sherman W. Gray, *The Least of My Brothers: Matthew 25:31-46, A History of Interpretation*.

The scene is set up in the final eschatological event of the judgment of the nations. Verse 25:31 introduces a portrait of the coming of “the Son of Man” (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*). This identification of Jesus is familiar to the Gospel readers from statements in previous texts such as 10:23; 13:40-43, 49-50; 16:27-28; 19:28; 24:30-31. As in many apocalyptic texts, the majesty and glory of the Son of Man is clearly emphasized by the inclusion of angels, glory and thrones.

Verses 32-33 are of most importance for the interpretation of the pericope. “All the nations” (*panta ta ethnē*) are gathered before the throne of glory. Six major proposals have been advanced to identify who are “all the nations”.¹⁶ (1) all non-Jews, (2) all non-Christians, (3) all non-Jews who are not Christians, (4) all Christians, (5) Christians alive when Christ returns, (6) all humanity. Equivalent phrases occur elsewhere in Matthew in 24:9, 14; 28:19. In all cases the phrase refers to non-Christians.¹⁷ So, as a preliminary conclusion, those who are judged are not Christians, but non-believers gentiles. This group of nations gathered before the throne is divided in two groups, as the metaphor of a shepherd separating the goats from the sheep shows.

After the division, the text quotes in vv 34-45 a dialogue between the King and the ones in the right and the ones on the left in relation to their response to the need of “the least of these my brothers” (*toutōn tōn adelphōn mou tōn elaxistōn*). Then, there seems to be a total of three groups: the ones at the right hand, the ones at the left hand, and “the least of *these* my brothers” of whom the King is talking. In vv 34-40 the King declares the fate of those of the right (34-36) and their response (35-39) concluding with the statement in which the King identifies himself with the “least ones” (*tōn elaxistōn*, 25:40). The phrase “the king” (*ho basileus*) recalls 2:2 and 21:5 where Jesus is presented as the Son of David. It may also points to the future scene in 27:11, 29, 37, and 42 (where Jesus’ kingship is mocked or

¹⁶W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison Jr. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. III) p 421.

¹⁷For a detailed discussion of Matthew’s use of *ethnos/ethnikos* see David Cortés-Fuentes, “Not Like the Gentiles: The Characterization of the Gentiles in the Gospel According to Matthew” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 9 (2001): 6-26; U. Luz (in “The Final Judgment (Matt 25:31-46)” p 294), understands the phrase as referring to pagans. Also, J. Friedrich, *Gott im Bruder?: eine methodenkritische Untersuchung von Redaktion, Überlieferung und Traditionen in Mt. 25, 31-46* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1977) p 254: “Die Folgerung für Mt 25,32 ist somit völlig klar: was für die anderen red Steller galt, muß auch hier gelten: ob Matt nun *panta ta ethnē* hier hinzugefügt hat oder nicht: schildern wollte er in jedem Fall das Gericht nicht über alle Menschen, sondern über alle nichtchristlichen Menschen.”

questioned). As in 22:11-14 a king passes eschatological judgment between people.

The six deeds of mercy mentioned here are traditional both in the Old Testament as well as in other early Jewish literature (Job 22:6-7; Isa 58:6-7; Ezek 18:5-9; Tob 4:16-17; Sir 7:32-36; *T. Jos* 1:5-7).¹⁸ In the book of Isaiah (58:6-7) these actions counter injustice and break the yoke of oppression enacted by wicked empires (cf. Matt 11:29). The “for” in verse 35 generated much discussion after the Reformation. To Catholics such as Robert Bellarmine it implied that meritorious works can earn salvation. Protestants such as Calvin and John Piscatory stressed that such works are a sign of salvation but do not earn it.¹⁹

The other phrase that produces great debate among the interpreters is “the least of these my brothers” (*toutōn tōn adelphōn mou tōn elaxistōn*, 25:40, 45). It uses language that refers in the gospel not to all marginalized people in general but to the disciples of Jesus (cf. 10:40; 12:46-50). The important question is who are “the least of these my brothers”? Five major alternatives have been proposed in identifying “the least of these my brothers”:²⁰ (1) everyone in need, whether Christian or not, (2) all Christians/disciples (10:40-42), (3) Jewish Christians, (4) Christian missionaries/leaders (10:40-42), (5) Christians who are not missionaries or leaders. In Matthew, when the word for “brother” (*adelphos*) is used as a the non-biological brothers it usually refers to Christians.²¹

The adjective “least” (*elachistos*) used here can be related to the reference to the “little one” (*mikros*) in 10:42-4; 11:11; 18:6, 10, and 14 which might favor identifying ‘the least’ with believers. The difficulty

¹⁸ According to Sherman W. Gray, (*The Least of My Brothers: Matthew 25:31-46, A History of Interpretation*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.): “There are strong thematic connections between Matt 25:31 and such passages as *1 Enoch* 45:3; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2-3; and 69:27, 29. An even closer link can be detected between Matt 24:30 and *1 Enoch* 62:5 in the combination of motifs found in Zech 12:10b and Dan 7:13a. J. C. Ingelaere observes (RHPR 50 [1970]: 29) that the focal point of Matthew’s view of the Son of Man is his role as judge, an activity ascribed exclusively to God in Jewish and apocalyptic tradition, with the exception of *1 Enoch* where the Son of Man judges.” (Footnote # 50 p 363).

¹⁹ As presented by W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison Jr. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. III) p 427, also in Sherman W. Gray, *The Least of My Brothers* p 284.

²⁰ W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison Jr. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Vol. III) p 428.

²¹ The various cases and numbers for the Greek word *adelphos* occurs 39 times in Matthew. Sometimes the word is translated as “neighbor” (7:3, 4, 5) which may create confusion in the English reader. The feminine (*adelphē*) form occurs 3 times (12:50; 13:56; 19:29), the first of them they are identified as those who do the will of “my heavenly Father.”

consist that some scholars do not want to identify the superlative “least” (*elaxistos*) that appears here, with “little” (*mikros*) in 10:42-4; 11:1; 18:6, 10, and 14. Nevertheless, the argument can be reinforced by the use of “my brothers” (*tōn adelphōn mou*) itself. It is almost certain that the statement refers not to people in general but rather to brothers and sisters of the Christian community, as elsewhere in the Gospel (12:48-49; 28:10, see too 23:8). Although “least” (*elaxistos*) is used elsewhere in Matthew to refer to persons only in 5:19, the true counterpart to the phrase is found in Matthew’s distinctive “the little ones” (*oi mikroi*) of which “least” (*elaxistos*) is the superlative. This phrase is used by Matthew generally to refer to disciples (18:6, 10, 14, where the subject is also Christian treatment of Christians).²²

The last sentence of the pericope in v 46 refers to the final separation of the condemned and the righteous. The wicked will go away “to eternal punishment,” (*eis kolasin aiōnion*).²³ “Punishment” (*kolasis*) is used elsewhere in the NT only in 1 John 4:18. While the condemned will go to punishment, the righteous will receive “eternal life” (the phrase used elsewhere in Matthew only in 19:16, 29). The judicial sentence of the nations is determined by their treatment of the “brothers.” An analogous determination for dividing the people according to their treatment of the disciples is found in Matt 10:5-15 (especially 12-15) and 10:40-42.

Two concluding notes are in order. First, if the identification of “all the nations” (*panta ta ethnē*) is correct, then the ones judged in this passage are not Christians but the non-believers Gentiles in general. Their judgment is based in how they treat “the least of these my brothers.” Second, if the identification of “these my brothers” is correct, then the nations are judged based on the way they treated the community of believers, the followers of Christ. As in 10:5-15 and 40:42, the destiny of the nations depends on their receiving and supporting those who are Jesus’ followers and disciples.

This interpretation is supported not only by the infernal textual evidence in Matthew, but also by the earliest interpreters of the Church. For instance, Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-166) in the context of the Eucharist service talks about the collection of gifts for “the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need” (Apol I: 67). Iereneus of Lyons (A.D. 120-202) in his work against the Heresies (4:30) also quotes this passage in relation to the offering people offer God. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-216) identifies the recipients of the good deeds described in Matt 25:31-46 as Christians (*Quis dives salvetur* 30:1-5). According to U. Luz: “Until ca.

²²D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, pp 744-745.

²³See also 7:23; 18:8; 25:34; Ps 6:8; Isa 30:33; 1 En 10:13; 67:13; Rev 19:20; 20:10.

1800, however, the generally circulated ecclesiastical interpretation on Matt 25:31-46 viewed 'the least of my brothers' as the members of the church. Most often this meant all the members of the church."²⁴

I agree with most of the Hispanic/Latino scholars about the struggle of the Hispanic Church in this country. The struggle for justice does not end at the door of the church, but extends even within the boundaries of our communities of faith and denominations. I read the text and concluded my research with frustration, even anger. How can I justify preaching the importance of these good deeds as sample of an ethic of solidarity and engagement when the text functions as a self-preserving promotion for the early community of Matthew? Can I apply the text even against the text's plain sense?

I believe some answers to these concerns were already being proposed by Ada María Isasi-Díaz when she talks about *Lo Cotidiano* as a key element of *Mujerista* theology.²⁵ As Ada María proposes for *Mujerista* theology, "we have to develop a method that provides opportunities for and enables grassroots Latinas to speak about themselves and their religious understandings and practices."²⁶ I have come to the conclusion that if we (Latinos/Latinas) keep waiting for the others to extend their helping hand to us "the least of these my brothers" we will have our hands extended for a long time to come. If anything good I get from this reading is that it is time for us to take charge of ourselves. For our communities to survive, as that of Matthew's church, we need to take care of our own people. The expressions of solidarity and companionship must be accompanied by strategic planning and solid theological foundation. Yes, we are the "least of these my brothers" not only for being the lower social class, for not having access to balance diets, health care, and adequate housing. We are the "least of these my brothers [and sisters]" because in addition to all that, we are children of the same God, received the same baptism and partake of the same bread and wine as any other Christian.

Resumen

El autor nos provee un análisis del texto de Mateo 25:31-46 que resulta en una conclusión sorprendente que identifica a los "mas pequeños de estos" con los creyentes y los juzgados con aquellos de las naciones que no reciben a los creyentes. El autor concluye identificando a los "más pequeños" con la comunidad hispana de creyentes y un llamamiento a acción.

²⁴Ulrich Luz, "The Final Judgment (Matt 25:31-46): An Exercise in 'History of Influence' Exegesis" p 280.

²⁵Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Lo Cotidiano: A Key Element of *Mujerista* Theology" *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 10 (2002): 5-17.

²⁶Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Lo Cotidiano" pp 5-6.

La paz: promesa y desafío

Luis G. Collazo

Tomo este título de toda una trayectoria de testimonio teológico y social de encarnada por movimientos eclesiales y comunitarios comprometidos con la promoción de la paz. Para comenzar esta reflexión me permito iniciar la misma con el poema-canción de León Gieco, Sólo le pido a Dios, la cual dice así:

Sólo le pido a Dios
que nada me sea indiferente
que la resaca de la muerte,
no me encuentre
vacío y sólo sin haber
hecho lo suficiente...

Sólo le pido a Dios
que lo injusto no me
sea indiferente...

Sólo le pido a Dios
que la guerra no me sea indiferente

es un monstruo grande
y pisa fuerte
sobre la pobre inocencia
de la gente...

Sólo le pido a Dios
que el futuro no me sea indiferente...

He querido referirme a la misma por lo acertada de esa caracterización de la guerra como un “monstruo grande, que pisa fuerte sobre la pobre inocencia de la gente”. La guerra es precisamente la encarnación plena y final de la violencia y la prepotencia. Hoy son los que dicen “seguir a Cristo, amar a su prójimo y perdonar a sus enemigos”, los que han producido, mercadeado, almacenado y utilizado los más aberrantes instrumentos de la muerte: las armas convencionales, las armas nucleares, bacteriológicas y químicas.

La guerra, como una de las manifestaciones de la violencia, debe verse con especial atención. Al convertirse en el paradigma supremo de toda violencia, nos exige examinarla con atención particular. Para iniciar este examen debemos precisar la naturaleza misma de su plataforma ideológica y filosófica. En su esencialidad la guerra constituye un proceso de deshumanización absoluta y total. En su libro *teología de la Paz*, el teólogo Paul Tillich nos indicaba lo siguiente,

“La descripción de la persona como una “herramienta” del proceso de producción les transforma, como resultado final, en un ser marginado sin espacio para el amor y la justicia” (*Theology of Peace*, 81).

Este proceso deshumanizante genera la disolución del vínculo supremo del amor propiciando así la semilla necesaria para la consolidación de un estilo nacionalista belicista y armamentista.

Lo que nos asalta la conciencia es el escenario de la modernidad que parece indicar que a más avanza la civilización, mayor es la utilización de la violencia como instrumento de poder. Más contradictorio aún es lo que muy acertadamente afirmaba el filósofo y novelista ruso León Tolstoy en su crítica a la modernidad. Decía Tolstoy;

Puede haber una impresión de matemáticas que admita que dos es igual a tres, pero no es realmente una ciencia matemática. Y es sólo una impresión de la ética el que matar en el contexto de la guerra o ejecutar un criminal está permitido, pero no es en verdad un acto ético. El reconocer que la vida de cada ser humano es sagrada es la primera y única fundamentación de la ética.(*the Kingdom of God*, 313)

Esa “bestia grande que pisa fuerte” es lo que en el “teatro” de guerra con Irak ha sido llamado la estrategia “golpe y disuasión”. En las primeras 48 horas de guerra contra Irak se utilizarán 400 misiles cruceros y 3,000 bombas “smart bombs”. Cada misil está valorado en un millón de dólares y cada bomba en \$80,000. los aviones a utilizarse son los B-2 con un estimado de costo operacional por hora de \$10,000. El costo combinado de esos dos días es de \$640 millones. La mal llamada “justicia infinita” (por la administración BUSH) realmente es la encarnación de la “violencia infinita” que en “aras” de la “civilización” y el eufemismo conocido como el “mundo libre”, ignora el sentido **sagrado de la vida**.

La guerra también se nos presenta como parte fundamental de un proyecto histórico. En ella la vitalidad humana es utilizada simultáneamente

de manera burda y subliminal. En esta, la violencia es matizada con valores supremos y tradiciones religiosas. Por eso mejor llamarla "Justicia Infinita" o "Guerra Santa". Así satanizamos al "enemigo" para justificar la aniquilación de *este* por medios aberrantes y violentos.

Esa idea de la guerra como una expresión legítima y "ortodoxa" de la violencia, la describía uno de los teóricos de la guerra. En su clásica obra *De la Guerra*, Clausewitz describe a ésta de la siguiente manera,

Guerra, en sentido literal, significa combate, porque sólo el combate es el principio eficaz en la actividad múltiple que en sentido amplio llamamos guerra. Pero el combate es una prueba de la fortaleza de las fuerzas espirituales y físicas, por medio de éste. Es evidente por sí mismo, que la parte espiritual no puede ser omitida, porque el estado de ánimo tiene la más decisiva de las influencias sobre las fuerzas empleadas en la guerra.(De la guerra, 119)

Considero muy aguda esta visión de caracterizar el combate –la guerra- como una demostración de "la fortaleza de las fuerzas espirituales y físicas". Es importante que nuestro análisis de la guerra y la violencia sea holístico reconociendo la función que juegan las "fuerzas espirituales" en el escenario de la guerra. No podemos ignorar que detrás de las líneas de combate están las "fuerzas del mal"(muerte) justificando sus acciones con los símbolos del "Bien". O lo que podemos llamar la manipulación de la ética y la religión a fin de justificar moralmente la guerra.

Pero la guerra también es lo que Clausewitz llama "un instrumento político" o lo que también llamó "una realización de la misma por otros medios". Dice Clausewitz,

En primer lugar, vemos, por lo tanto, que en todas las circunstancias debemos considerar a la guerra no como algo independiente, sino como un instrumento político. Solamente si adoptamos este punto de vista podremos evitar el caer en contradicción con toda la historia militar y podremos hacer una apreciación inteligente de su totalidad.(de la guerra, 60)

Hoy la guerra contra Irak es esencialmente un acto político justificado con discursos espirituales, religiosos y axiológicos. Es la política de los "buenos" contra los "malos", la política de la "Seguridad Nacional" o lo que también podríamos llamar la política de la "globalización de la prepotencia y/o venganza" por medios bélicos avalado por la "Justicia

Infinita” y operacionalizada por cristianos “fieles al evangelio del amor” y por judíos devotos a la “Tora”.

Esta perspectiva de la guerra debe ser superada radicalmente. Los conflictos bélicos representan la parálisis profunda de nuestros recursos espirituales y morales... Como acertadamente señalaba Bertran Russell en su libro *La sociedad humana*, cito,

Esto no es lo que exige el arte de gobernar. Si, como hemos estado discutiendo, la solución a los problemas del mundo no se encuentra en la guerra, se debe encontrar en la conciliación y en una disminución gradual del odio y el temor. (*Sociedad humana*, 241)

El fortalecimiento de un proceso formativo espiritual y ético puede contribuir a crear una mentalidad post-bélica que propicie el florecimiento de valores como la solidaridad, la interdependencia, el perdón, la tolerancia y la co-existencia pacífica.

El escepticismo debe ser superado con una fuerte ración de optimismo y coraje moral. Es imperativo proponer un Pentecostés del “shalom”, un “avivamiento” en la justicia y una “conversión” a la paz. Estoy plenamente en acuerdo con Bertran Russell en su afirmación profética cuando señala,

La guerra, como se vio en el capítulo anterior, no parece ser un camino hacia cosas mejores, sea cual sea su resultado. (*Sociedad humana*, 240)

El camino de la guerra atrofia el amor, y el amor es condición única para una sociedad justa y pacífica. Se requiere constituir una sociedad que encarne los valores de un mundo nuevo y mejor. En ella tendremos espacio para la vida.

“Sólo le pido a Dios
que nada me sea indiferente
que la resaca de la muerte,
no me encuentre
vacío y sólo sin haber
hecho lo suficiente...

Sólo le pido a Dios
que lo injusto no me
sea indiferente...

En su reflexión sobre el cristianismo como uno de los factores constitutivo de la modernidad, Tolstoy expresa su desilusión con los

contenidos éticos y morales de ese mundo moderno llamado cristiano y simultáneamente adorador de esos “dioses de metal” encarnados en los aberrantes instrumentos bélicos de destrucción masiva y convencional. En su libro *A confesion*, nos dice Tolstoy,

La tragedia de la situación del mundo cristiano consiste en el hecho de que debido a un malentendido, las naciones cristianas han adoptado como suyas una enseñanza religiosa cuyo significado claramente niega y destruye toda la estructura social de la vida, a partir de la cual ellos estaban viviendo y sin la cual no podrían imaginar la vida. (*A Confesión*, 170)

La guerra, la violencia se nos presenta como “arma” que opera a favor de la disfuncionalidad de nuestra convivencia social y en contra de la pluralidad cultural y la solidaridad comunitaria. El poder destructivo de la violencia, en particular de la guerra, impacta los elementos más sublimes de lo constitutivamente comunitario y humano.

He titulado esta reflexión “La paz: promesa y desafío” precisamente porque la construcción de una “cultura de paz” es un desafío a nuestra conciencia ética, a nuestra conducta moral y a nuestra vocación humana. Considero que construir “la paz” es la responsabilidad mayor de cada persona. Tal compromiso tiene que fundamentarse en una praxis sustentada en una justicia cotidiana, local y global.

La ética bíblica-cristiana nos insiste en constituir la justicia como plataforma desde la que construyamos una cultura de paz. Los profetas nos dicen “el fruto de la justicia es la paz” (Isaías 32:17) y “Siembren ustedes justicia y recojan cosecha de amor” (Oseas 10:12); el salmista nos dice” Busca la paz , y síguela” (Salmos 34:14); Jesús nos dice” ” Dichosos los que trabajan por la paz” (Mateo 5:9).

El testimonio de los “padres de la Iglesia” nos insisten en una ética cristiana comprometida con la paz como opción preferencial; teólogos cristianos y no cristianos nos proponen el camino de la paz como la manera plena de cumplir el designio divino; filósofos como Sir Bertrand Russell y Leon Tolstoy defienden la paz como fundamento ético de primer orden. Militantes como Martín L. King y Eugenio María de Hostos afirmaron la paz como central al “ethos” individual y social. Así tenemos una “nube” de testigos, de profetas y militantes que nos proponen lo que el salmista resume en el verso “Busca la paz (shalom) y síguela”.

Ese desafío de la paz va a requerir resistencia ante la opción de la violencia y la guerra como método para la paz. La paz nos llama a desafiar la guerra y la violencia en todas sus manifestaciones. En su libro *Sobre la desobediencia* el gran psicoanalista Erich Fromm nos decía,

La desobediencia es entonces, en el sentido que aquí le damos, un acto de afirmación de la razón y la voluntad. No es primordialmente una actitud dirigida contra algo, sino a favor de algo: de la capacidad humana de ver, de decir lo que se ve y de rehusarse a decir lo que no se ve. Para hacerlo así el hombre no necesita ser agresivo o rebelde; necesita mantener sus ojos abiertos, estar plenamente alerta y deseoso de asumir la responsabilidad de hacer abrir los ojos a quienes se hallan en peligro de parecer porque están amodorrados. *(Sobre la desobediencia, 56)*

Por así decirlo, el camino de la paz es vitalmente una toma de conciencia, metodológica y pedagógicamente es concientización o concientiación. Lo que Paulo Freire llamó “problematización” de la realidad y educación como liberación. Para construir la paz será necesario “deconstruir nuestra ortodoxia y dogmatismo” de carácter religioso, moral y político que justifica la violencia y la guerra; exige reinventar nuestro cuadro de valores sociales y políticos. Requerirá revalorar y re-afirmar el sentido de la protesta, de la desobediencia civil, de la resistencia pacífica y la denuncia del “estado de cosas” como algo legítimo.

En sus reflexiones sobre la ética de Bertrand Russell, Fromm, con un acierto ético excelente fundamentaba ese derecho a la “desobediencia” que debemos reclamar y practicar. Ese llamado a “resistir” la guerra y la violencia es un imperativo moral. Refiriéndose a Russell, decía Fromm,

La capacidad de desobediencia de Bertrand Russell no se enraíza en ningún principio abstracto, sino en la experiencia más real que existe: el amor a la vida. *(Sobre la desobediencia, 56)*

Las posibilidades de la paz hay que plantarlas en el desafío y la promesa que exige el amor. La opción preferencial por el amor no significa una aproximación romántica a éste sino darle espacio y oportunidad a las “obras del amor”. El amor es aquí una “fuerza” que supera la violencia. Es por así decirlo, “el camino excelente”.

Para adelantar el “shalom” (paz) en el sentido hebreo -esa plenitud de vida en un contexto solidario- hay que reconocer la dimensión afectiva que aporta el amor. El amor es como tal la dimensión emocional que genera una conciencia ética. Una opción por la paz recibe su vitalidad de una afectividad solidaria y de un compromiso pleno y existencial con la integración de la creación.

El amor nos mueve a ser “pacificadores”, amantes de la paz. La paz es promesa sagrada en la medida que seamos pro-activos, intencionalmente agentes constructores de paz. El ser “pacífico” no es suficiente. Si amamos, entonces somos “pacificadores”. Este ser “pacificadores” representa una demanda moral de oponerse a la violencia y a la guerra. Para Tolstoy la “ley del amor” es clave ética para transformar la “cultura de la muerte”. Tolstoy nos presenta la “ley del amor” al señalar,

Da vergüenza que en la Cristiandad se tenga que probar que la ley del amor es un absoluto ético. Jamás los pueblos de la cristiandad, creyentes y no creyentes, que reconocen un código moral en lo relativo a la ley del amor que se opone a toda violencia, tendrán que probar que ésta es una realidad antagónica y totalmente inaplicable al valor (sacralidad) de la vida. (*A Confesión*, 177)

En Tolstoy se nos propone una oposición moral a “toda forma de violencia” por ser absolutamente inaplicable a la dignidad de la vida. La violencia, y la guerra como una de sus manifestaciones, no sólo representan una amenaza para la vida humana sino también constituyen un agente hostil a la naturaleza. La armonía de la creación resulta degradada por el “moloc” de las armas y el militarismo. La integridad del planeta y el Universo es subordinada a los avances del poderío militar y a un sofisticado mercado de armas. Los ensayos con todo tipo de armas ignoran por completo los daños irreparables que se infligen a nuestros ecosistemas.

La promesa de la paz es una exigencia mayor a nuestra conciencia ética y a nuestro análisis crítico de cara a la realidad avasalladora de toda forma de violencia, y en especial la guerra. La promesa de la paz se nos presenta como utopía; como visión de futuro radicalmente nuevo y mejor. Adelantar los proyectos del “shalom” nos obliga a trabajar fuerte y consecuentemente a favor de la justicia; de los Derechos Humanos, de una cultura de paz, por la erradicación de toda forma de discriminación y racismo, por la preservación de la integridad de la creación; por una justa distribución de la riqueza y los bienes materiales del mundo; por la erradicación del odio y la tristeza; por el perdón infinito; por la reconciliación de pueblos, etnias y personas, luchar fuerte por los derechos de los niños/as; por mejores salarios; por la promoción amplia de las bellas artes...

La promesa de la paz nos exige adoptar para sí la genialidad de la esperanza. La esperanza que deberá ser creativa. En ella debemos inspirar nuestra conciencia ética y nuestra conducta moral. Corresponde de manera muy especial a las jóvenes y a los jóvenes de esta generación constituirse en militantes de la paz, de la no-violencia, de la resistencia pacífica y la desobediencia civil. En estas posturas sociales y existenciales está nuestra

“moral social” según nos las presentara el gran eticista Eugenio María de Hostos.

Recuerdo a Ernesto Sabato, en su obra titulada, *La Resistencia*, alentarnos a explorar nuevos caminos para una vida nueva y solidaria. En esa obra exquisitamente esperanzadora Sabato nos dice,

El ser humano sabe hacer de los obstáculos nuevos caminos porque a la vida le basta el espacio de una grieta para renacer. En esta tarea, lo primordial es negarse a asfixiar cuanto de vida podamos alumbrar. Defender, como lo han hecho heroicamente los pueblos ocupados, la tradición que nos dice cuánto de sagrado tiene el hombre. No permitir que se nos desperdicie la gracia de los pequeños momentos de libertad que podemos gozar: una mesa compartida con gente que queremos, unas criaturas a las que demos amparo, una caminata entre los árboles, la gratitud de un abrazo. ... Éstos no son hechos racionales, pero no es importante que lo sean, nos salvaremos por los afectos. (*La resistencia*, 108)

Por ahí, por esa “grieta” que nos señala Sabato, se nos revela el camino de la paz. Por ahí, por ese reto de lo cotidiano, debemos asomarnos para transformar el odio en amor infinito, para transformar la guerra en la paz como fruto de la justicia. En ese sentido radical de la esperanza, vale la pena adoptar la opción de Ernesto Sabato cuando dice,

Me inclino con reverencia ante quienes se han dejado matar sin devolver el golpe. Yo he querido mostrar esta bondad suprema del hombre en personajes simples como Hortensia Paz o el sargento Sosa. Como ya lo he afirmado, el ser humano no podría sobrevivir sin héroes, santos y mártires porque el amor, como el verdadero acto creador, es siempre la victoria sobre el mal. (*La resistencia*, 76)

Por tanto como dije en la siguiente poesía,

ODA LA PAZ

En el amanecer del primero
de noviembre de mil novecientos
ochenta y tres
Luego de no sé cuantas
Invasiones terrestres y aéreas
“Pacificaciones” violentas aprisa
“alertas” militares y ensayos bélicos

Luego de no sé cuantas
Paradas Presentaciones militares
Represiones torturas conquistas
Conversaciones "Negociaciones" de paz
"bajas" muertes prisioneras prisioneros

Luego de no sé cuantas
Fuerzas "pacificadoras"
Consejos de "seguridad" de "paz"
Mentiras manipulaciones diplomacias
Embajadas cuarteles arrestos

Luego de no sé cuantas
huérfanos huérfanas viudas
Padres que lloran madres que sufren
Rosas secas árboles exterminados
Futuro que se extingue
Presente que hiede ya

En el génesis
de este día sin horas
Aún Canto a la paz
Porque La paloma sigue su vuelo
y la golondrina crece en su nidal
y cantan los viejos del mundo
y se manifiestan los militantes de la
Fraternidad

y La Jíbara pare una niña
y La primavera no claudica
Adelante hermanas hermanos
del Mundo
Resistamos La injusticia
Forcemos La Paz

**ASI QUE LES DIGO "Caminante No hay camino, se hace camino
al andar"...**

Summary

The author provides an argument that challenges Christians and humanity as a whole to seek peace actively, arguing that peace is an ethical demand that calls us to actively oppose the forces of violence in the world, particularly war. Violence and war create a dysfunctional social relationship. Peace, on the other hand, seeks to restore the wholeness implied in the biblical concept of "shalom." As such, peace is grounded in love, and pose a challenge to us to live in accordance to our ethical commitment and human vocation, through resistance to the structures of violence and in actively seeking justice in all our daily relations.

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